

The First Detachable Collar. Hannah Montague Made One Just Like This for Her Husband a Hundred Years Ago.

By Clive Marshall

TROY, New York, is making ready to celebrate the Centennial of the Great American Collar.

No, that is not an attempt at a joke. In the hundred years just past, Troy has been civilizing civilization by giving it that symbol of respectability which has become as much a necessity as a shave or a hair cut. And now that the century is up, and the cycle complete, and the collar established, now that all the world wears the little white yoke, Troy is going to draw aside the veil and show the world what it has done. Troy is going to end the notion held by the uninitiated that the collar is merely a small and unimportant article of dress, with no other claim to present distinction than its exorbitant price. Troy is going to expound the collar.

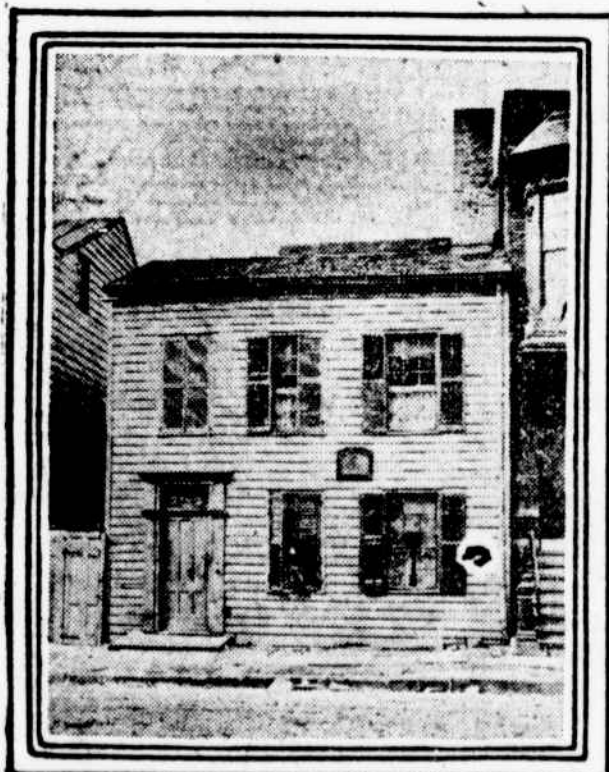
The collar is an ancient institution. Our great-great-grandfathers wore collars. But the detachable collar—they never heard of that! The detachable collar started with Mrs. Hannah Montague of Troy, the wife of the village blacksmith. If Mrs. Montague had not wanted more time to herself, and if she hadn't felt a militant resentment against the demands of her husband's daily wash (for the wash of a blacksmith is likely to be a grimy affair), we might never have had the modern collar.

Daily did Orlando Montague call for a clean collar. That meant a clean shirt, and that meant another trip to the wash tub.

But one day Hannah had an idea. Snip went her scissors; and snip went the collar—divorced forever from that henceforth polygamous shirt.

How the Collar Began

That was 100 years ago. It is too bad that weary and irritated Hannah could not have seen the circles that would spread over all the world from the splash of that idea of hers, culminating in a world industry that today supports in Troy 25,000 employees; that has a yearly output of 100,000,000 dozen collars in the edges of which are stitched 2,080,000 miles of thread—a business so vast, so exclusive and so highly spe-



The Montague House, the Home of the First Collar, Still Stands at 129 Third Street, Troy.

cialized that it has put Troy on the map as the Collar City.

In the days of Hannah Montague there was no such thing as a collar button as we now know it. Nor had the sewing machine been developed. But that didn't hinder the resourceful dame a bit. She tied the collar to the shirt band; and for years thereafter it was known as the "string collar"—a name not familiar to this generation.

Orlando was delighted with the new contraption. Daily he stopped his forge and left Dobbin to wait for his new footwear in order that he might display his neckwear to every Trojan who passed that way. It was a nine-day wonder; and each new enthusiast slapped his leg and exclaimed in whatever was the stately lingo of that period: "I'll tell it to the world!"

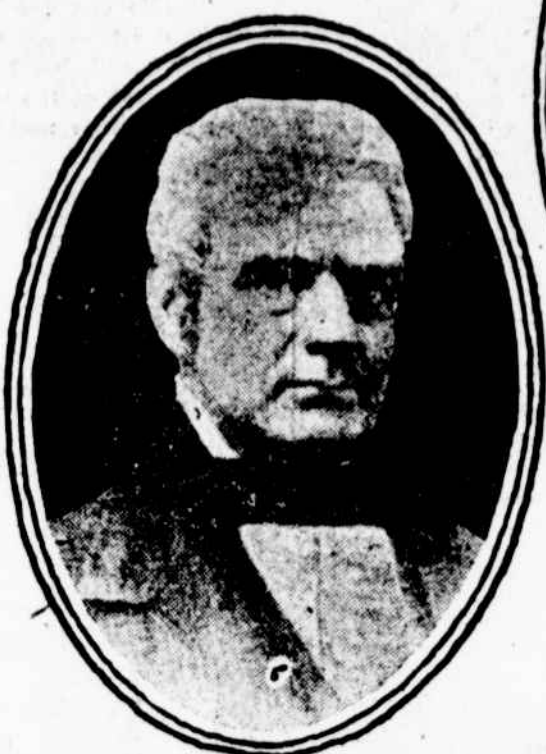
One of these converts was the Rev. Ebenezer Brown, a retired Methodist minister. The Rev. Mr. Brown, having retired from the ministry, was running a general store in Troy, at 235 River street.

He surveyed Orlando's string collar from all angles. He even tried it on. Then, he went hot-foot to Mrs. Montague and persuaded her to make a few dozen of those collars and let him offer them for sale.

She did, and he did, and the collars went like

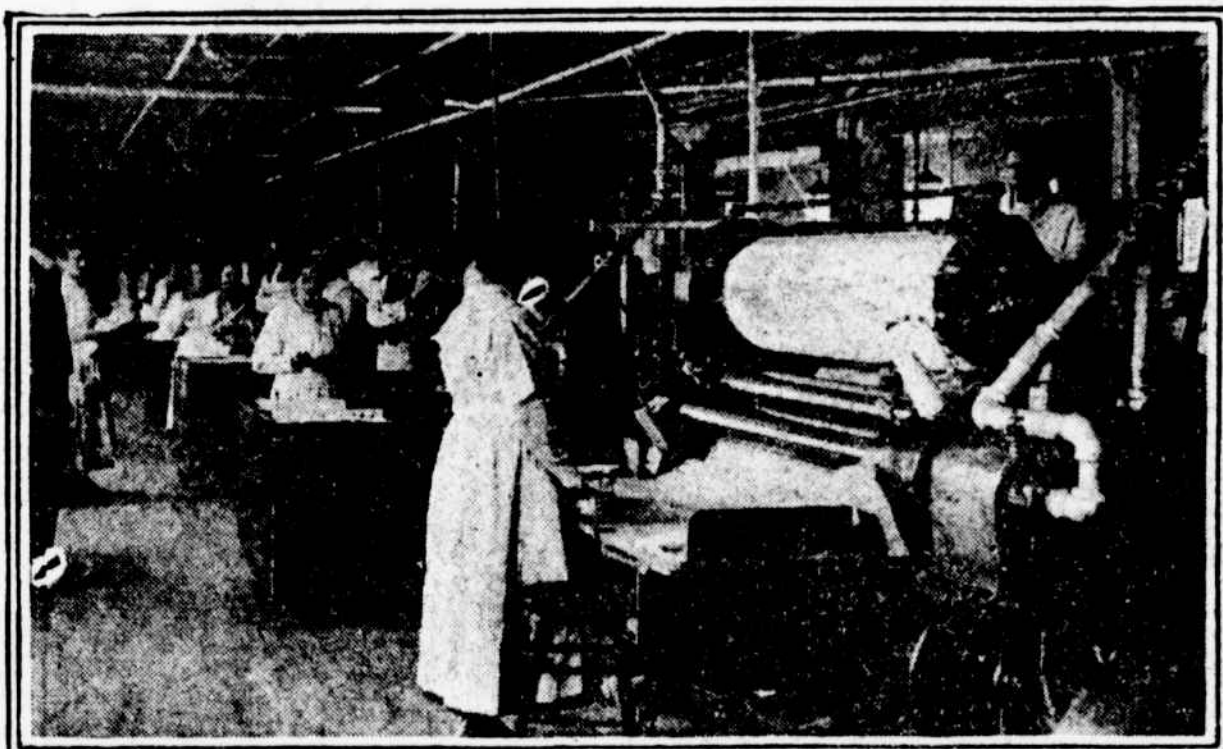
The Centenary of the American Collar

Troy, N. Y., Claims the Glory of the First "Detachable," and Will Celebrate the Triumph of Hannah Montague, Who Found a Way of Making Her Laundry Work a Bit Easier.



Mrs. Hannah Montague, Born in 1794, Who First Separated Collar and Shirt—with a Pair of Scissors.

At Left, Her Husband, Orlando, the Village Blacksmith, Who Had the Distinction of Wearing the First Detachable Collar Ever Made.



This Is Where New Collars Get Their First Introduction to the Ironing Board.

hot cakes. They went so fast that what Hannah Montague could make for him was as a drop in the bucket beside his needs. So Hannah gave him a pattern, from which he cut out the material, and then he had the village seamstress do the stitching and turning.

The collar sold to the Trojans by the Reverend Ebenezer was a stand-up affair with high points that rose on each side the wearer's chin. It was made of bombazine or satin stiffened with hair-cloth.

So the Reverend Ebenezer prospered; and the making and selling of collars went on in Troy and has gone on rolling up like a snowball to this day. It will continue into an unguessable future. Last year, for instance, China used a billion or so ready-made cigarettes. What will happen when China, the Land of the Laundry, takes up the collar?

Last year the 25,000 collar makers of Troy made collars valued at \$225,000,000. And, built around the site of Ebenezer Brown's country store, now rise acres and acres of factory buildings in which they labor who are the Army of the Collar.

There are a very few cities in this country that have been made truly famous by some one industry. Detroit, of course, is the home of the automobile; Milwaukee is quite famous. Akron is another word for rubber; Dayton for the cash register—Troy for the collar.

Collar making is a peculiar craft. It calls for so many kinds and varieties of skill that it automatically excludes the worker who is not, so to speak, born to it. Its traditions, methods, conditions of work, skill and craft spirit are a psychology and pre-eminently humanized product. The economics of the thing is built on the human heart; and it has rooted in that particular soil like a century-old oak. To move it you'd probably have to kill it.

The Art of Collar Making

Jobs are passed on from father to son. The expert cutter may bequeath his skill; for instance, "I want to work here because my grandfather did," was the comment of a 17-year-old lad when he put in his application for a job recently in one of the large plants. That note is struck constantly, and the collar manufacturers would be uneasy indeed if it were lacking.

The president of a long-established concern



Examiners of the "Top Stitch." Thanks to Their Trained Eyes Your Collar and Its Band Never Fail to Fit Each Other to a Hair.

and what qualities they must have to do it. It is more than a curious and interesting mechanical process; it is the test which determines the fitness of these men and women.

Every man has his own style of neck. After he has found the kind of collar that best goes with his peculiar kind of beauty, he requires that the collar shall not be lopsided, that it won't ride up and down on his neck, that it shall be comfortable as well as sightly, that it be easy to put on or take off, that—oh Memory!—there be plenty of space for the tie to slip easily, that it be durable, that it stand laundering, that even under such rough treatment it neither shrink nor change its shape, that the button holes retain their integrity against any kind of a collar button or any kind of pull and haul whatsoever—in short that the great American neckpiece be made like the wonderful one-hoss shay.

Counting the Cost

And a century of experience has taught the collar makers of Troy to attain that kind of perfection, and to make a real collar.

There are two classes of collars, the standing collar and the fold collar. There are endless varieties of each. Most of them are made four-ply, that is, with an outer and inner facing, and two inner layers of heavier cloth. Before the days of shrinkage laundering, a collar generally meant welts, wrinkles and general shapelessness. But now the first step in making a collar is to shrink the cloth till there is no shrink left. Shrinkage is an exact science. It is shrinkage that has made it possible for collars to be made in quarter sizes and to stay quarter sized.

Something of the magnitude of the industry may be gathered from the fact that one collar plant handles the material that goes into its collars in single continuous strips 14 miles in length. The capacity of the stitching rooms that sew together these webs is 100 miles of cloth daily. The

were made to order for me by the best haberdasher in Paris."

"Try an American collar," said the launderer, "and you'll see that I'm right."

The prince accepted the challenge, the launderer called a bellboy, gave him a quarter, and sent him out to buy two collars—that being in the palmy days when a dollar was a dollar.

And thereafter Prince Helie stuck to American collars.

Why Men Tip Their Hats

DO you know how it came about that a man takes off his hat when he meets a lady? You know? In the olden days, when a knight arrived at a neighboring castle, he took off his helmet to show his host and friends that he did not suspect them of ulterior motives, and did not anticipate a bang on the head with a sword or a mace! To enter helmeted amounted to saying that he preferred to run no risks. From this has come the custom of a man baring his head as greeting.

That a man should take off his right glove before shaking hands with a woman comes from the same period, when travelers wore iron gauntlets, which were removed to avoid injuring an uncovered hand.

The custom of firing artillery salutes comes down from the time when guns were first used. It was then considered polite and courteous to any great personage who happened to arrive at your castle to load all your guns with shotted rounds—not blank—and to fire them off as he arrived at your threshold. The reason for doing this was to show how you trusted your guest by emptying all the guns just before he came into their range.

This practice was not kept up very long. Blank rounds were soon fired instead of real ones. They were not so dangerous!

The origin of saluting the quarter-deck of one boards a man-of-war is that in days of



Eighty-two Per Cent. of the Troy Collar Operators Are Women. It Is Possible That One of the Pretty Girls in This Photograph Made the Very Collar You Are Wearing.

that bears his name and bore that of his father before him, explained the unusual loyalty of the workers this way:

"All our fathers," he said, "started out in this business as boys, at the bottom of the ladder. I did the same. That has meant, among other things, intimate contacts with those who were then our fellow-workmen. Some very fine and enduring friendships began that way, and there are men among my workmen who feel as much at home in my office as any other of my friends. If they've got anything on their chests they haven't the least hesitation about turning the knob and coming in. And they hit out straight from the shoulder and so do I; and we get somewhere. What they have to say about the point of view of the workman is authentic; and thus we learn to see things through each other's eyes. Any worker is at liberty to come to me with his troubles at any time."

The process of making a collar is in itself an extraordinarily significant thing when you consider how exacting it is, and how completely and perfectly these workers overcome its difficulties,

annual thread consumption in Troy is 2,080,000 miles.

Incidentally, it is of interest to note what that cloth used to cost and what it costs now. In 1915 a certain standard fabric cost nine cents a yard. Now it costs 55 cents. One that cost 7½ cents in 1915 now costs 35 cents. Another has jumped from 6 cents to 28 cents. The average total increase is 400 per cent.

Such are the elements that go to the making of the American collar. If anyone has any lingering notion that the Troy collar is not supreme in its field, he is referred to the story of what happened to Prince Helie de Sagan when he came to this country to woo Anna Gould. The prince stopped in New York at the St. Regis. When his laundry came back from the lower regions of that hotel his collars were in shreds.

The irate prince called for the launderer. "What have you done to my collars?" he demanded.

"They won't stand our methods of laundering," said the launderer.

"Nonsense!" quoth the prince. "Why they

when a crucifix was always placed at the stern of the vessel, it was, of course, saluted by all who came on board. Though the crucifix has disappeared, the custom remains, and men still salute the place where it used to be.

The custom of offering the right hand is the same practically as that of baring the head or of firing salutes. When one man met another in long-age times, he held out his unarmed sword-hand to show that his intentions were not evil.

The habit of mounting a horse on the near side came about because as a man wore his sword on the left he could not very well mount his horse on that side. This must be a comparatively recent custom, for swords were worn quite short and on the right side even in the first years of the Christian era.

The wearing of trousers is also a recent custom. Even to this day the greater part of the human race—when it is not unclothed—wears skirts or draperies of some sort. The cassock, or soutane, as worn by Roman Catholic priests, was the dress usually worn by gentlemen up to more or less recent times.